



Education That Works For a Lifetime

**To: The Honorable Andrew Maynard, Senate Chair
The Honorable Jack Hennessy, House Chair
The Honorable Jason Welch, Senate Ranking
The Honorable Al Adinolfi, House Ranking
Members of the Select Committee on Veterans' Affairs**

From: Marc S. Herzog, Chancellor

**Re: Public Hearing Testimony
*HB 5058, An Act Concerning College Tuition and Fee Waivers for Veterans***

Date: February 10, 2011

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding HB 5058.

The Community Colleges wholeheartedly support our troops, veterans and their families for whom access to educational opportunities should be encouraged. The twelve Community Colleges support the recognition of those who have sacrificed and those who have served to protect the United States. We implore the state to explore ways to fund the financial obligations for this waiver expansion and the current statutorily mandated waivers.

The Community Colleges are the largest provider of military waivers in the Connecticut Higher Education System. In 2010, the cost was approximately \$2 million dollars to the Community College System without state reimbursements for these waivers.

The State of Connecticut is required by statute to provide reimbursement for military waivers. This reimbursement has never been provided. Each year, these statutorily mandated but unreimbursed waivers result in an increased revenue loss to the operating budgets of all of the Higher Education constituent units in Connecticut. Therefore, the costs of these waivers are paid for by students who are *not* eligible for the waivers. An appropriation would be required to implement these proposals and to remove what would be an unintended shift of responsibility to those who are not receiving military waivers.

HB 5058 would require the Community Colleges, the Connecticut State University System and the University of Connecticut to waive the payment of "fees" charged for summer school session courses for veterans. At the Community Colleges, "fees" include "extension fees." We charge extension fees in lieu of "tuition" for "self-funded extension courses and programs." Therefore, any requirement to waive "fees" thus results in a waiver of the primary revenue source that is essential to pay for the cost of the instructor salaries, fringe

benefits, and other related expenses. In order to run these courses, colleges must have sufficient paying customers to cover their direct and indirect instructional and support costs. Any requirement to waive the payment of such “fees” could actually result in colleges being unable to run certain courses at all, if as a result the college does not have sufficient revenues to cover its costs.

There may not be a need to create another financial assistance program for veterans. Given the need-based financial aid programs, additional federal financial aid programs aimed at veterans, existing state waiver covering tuition for all veterans, most veterans are already covered for some or all tuition, fee and other educational costs. It would be problematic to ask colleges to absorb the additional costs of summer courses or “extension-funded courses” when there are already programs in place, which could cover the “tuition” or “self-funded extension courses and programs,” including the following:

- Need based financial aid programs such as Federal Pell and State CAPCS, while not directed solely at veterans, are available to students who demonstrate financial need and/or meet the other program requirements which relate to enrollment in a program of study, or half-time study, etc.
 - The Community Colleges award an estimated \$1 million each fall and spring semester to veterans who demonstrate financial need
 - The Federal Pell program was recently expanded to allow for substantially higher Pell awards to students whose program of study includes the summer term – potentially allowing students to receive as much as 150% - 200% of the “normal” Pell level in a given award year.
- The Post-9/11 GI bill provides substantial funding to eligible veterans based on their length of post-9/11 service. The Community Colleges receive over \$1 million per semester of federal funding that covers tuition and fees for such veterans. Veterans also receive additional federal aid directly for their living expenses and books.

If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me or the Community College Legislative Liaison, Meghan Collins Fanning: mfanning@commnet.edu or 860-244-7631.